

November 10, 2010

To the Coalition of Military Medical Center Neighbors:

Thank you for your letter of November 5, 2010 regarding the future organization of the BRAC Implementation Committee. Please rest assured that I intend for the BIC to remain intact and operational for as long as necessary.

Since February 2007 the BIC has made substantial contributions to help the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center become an integral part of our community. We need to continue this community effort to address BRAC impacts. I appreciate and value the contributions of the members of the BIC, as well as individual community members and organizations like yours, the CMMCN. Community leaders have taken extraordinary initiative to educate and inform thousands of households and to bring back to me their ideas and concerns relating to BRAC.

My Executive Order of February 2007 established the BIC with its mission to identify community impacts from BRAC in Bethesda and coordinate initial assessments of important BRAC-related community issues. At the time the completion of this mission was expected to coincide with the federally-mandated completion of the BRAC consolidation in Bethesda by September 2011.

At this time it appears the mission set forth in the Executive Order isn't complete, and I don't know if it will be complete by September 2011. But BRAC-related construction will be far from over even if that mission is completed by then, so community oversight and interaction with responsible officials would continue to be necessary.

After much deliberation among community stakeholders since 2007, three BRAC-related construction projects have been identified and are in different phases of planning: the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) project to improve sidewalks and bike paths, the State Highway Administration (SHA) Intersections Improvement project, and MCDOT's MD 355/Rockville Pike Crossing Study.

The sidewalks/bike paths project has been thoroughly vetted by the community and has been the subject of Mandatory Referral hearings by the Park and Planning Board. I expect construction will be completed by September 2011. While the amount of funding available to construct SHA's Intersections Improvement project is not clear, thanks to substantial community input and Mandatory Referral hearings we do know the planned designs and phases of construction.

However, the design and funding of the MD 355 Crossing Study is far less clear. MCDOT's Environmental Study is still under way, a preferred design has yet to be selected, and adequate funding has yet to be identified. While there has been substantial opportunity for community input on the Crossing Study, Mandatory Referral hearings have yet to be held. The Crossing Study is still in its early stages and at this time the BIC mission identified in the Executive Order has not been completed.

I hope to have a clearer picture in the months ahead of what funding will be available to lead to a preferred design by September 2011. But at this time I don't know if we will meet that

timeframe. For the sake of our community, I certainly hope we do. And if the project design is identified by September 2011, then the County Attorney has advised me that the terms of the Executive Order will have been met.

Nonetheless I expect the BIC to remain intact beyond September 2011 in some fashion. I believe the community – civic and business leaders and government representatives – needs to stay together and work together to monitor BRAC-related affairs and advise me of concerns that may arise. The last thing I want is for the BIC to disband and I certainly hope that all the community stakeholders and government representatives who have volunteered many hours of their valuable time will continue their high level of involvement and commitment. I plan to address this matter by getting a better idea of where we are in BRAC project design, funding, and construction and whether the Office of Economic Adjustment will fund the BRAC Coordinator position beyond September 2011 to support the BIC or if the County would need to identify another way to support it.

Thank you again for all your hard work as BIC members and as concerned and active members of our community. Please know that your deliberations are very important to me.

Sincerely,

Isiah Leggett
County Executive